

- 4 wherein the raised peripheral edge has a thickness of about 0.007 inches.
6. The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to Claim 1 wherein the step of creating a raised region comprises applying fine particles to the first surface of at least one coated metal sheet.
7. The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to Claims 3 or 6, wherein said fine particles are plasma sprayed onto the coated metal sheet.
8. The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to Claim 7 wherein said fine particles are zinc dust.
9. The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to Claim 7 wherein said fine particles are steel dust.

REMARKS

Receipt of the International Search Authority's first written opinion dated 24 January 2005 is hereby acknowledged.

The Examiner has stated that claims 1-2 of the present application do not satisfy the criterion set forth in Article 33(2) PCT because the subject matter of claims 1-2 is not new in respect of the prior art. In particular, the Examiner has stated that document D1 discloses each and every element of claim 1.

In response, applicant has amended claim 1 to more particularly claim that which is regarded as the invention. Substitute claims pages are submitted herewith in triplicate. No new matter has been added and the amendment is fully supported by the specification as filed.

D1 teaches the use of indenting the surface of the sheet metal creating a recess when the two sheets are juxtaposed with each other. D1 does not teach forming a gap between the two sheets of metal as is now claimed in amended claim 1. Accordingly, applicant submits that amended claim 1 meets the criteria of Article 33(2) PCT. Withdrawal of this rejection is clearly in order.

Applicant submits that amended claim 1 also meets the criteria of Article 33(3) PCT. In the art cited in the Search Report, US Patent nos. 5,104,032 and 6,528,756 both teach forming a gap between the two sheets of coated metal. However, both teach forming indentations or embossments that are visible from the second surface of the sheet. In the present invention, the raised region is only on the first surface of the coated sheet and the *second surface remains continuous and uninterrupted*. This method resolves the problem of welding coated metal

sheets without removing or damaging the protective coating and thereby maintaining the anti-corrosive properties of the coating. Applicant submits that amended claim 1 would not have been obvious and thus meets the criteria of Article 33(3) PCT.

Applicant requests entry of the new claims 4-9. New claims 4-9 are fully supported by the specification and does not introduce new subject matter. Further, new claims 4-9 depend upon amended claim 1, which is submitted to meet the criteria of Article 33 PCT and thus also meet the criteria of Article 33 PCT.

In view of the foregoing amendments and submissions, favourable reconsideration is respectfully requested with a view towards a positive opinion under Article 33 PCT.

Respectfully submitted,

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